

Body Of Youth Found In Chattahoochee

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Body Of Youth Found In Chattahoochee

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The body of a young black male, clothed only in underwear, was found Monday afternoon tangled in underbrush in the middle of the Chattahoochee River in a remote area of southwest Fulton County.

The body was the 21st found in the metropolitan Atlanta area since July 28, 1979. Most of the victims have been underprivileged, slightly built males and many were either strangled or suffocated.

Sgt. Denny L. Hendrix of the Fulton County Police Department said the badly decomposed

The circumstances surrounding the discovery of another body Monday fit several patterns of other recent child slayings. Page 1-C.

body was discovered about 3:30 p.m. in the river by two people who were testing a new motor on a boat.

Hendrix said the body appeared to be that of a male between 10 and 20 years of age. "The only thing we know now is that it's the body of a young black male which fits the same categories as the ones found previously," Hendrix said.

The body was clad in jockey shorts, he said, adding that there was no immediate indication of

a cause of death.

This latest body was the eighth to be discovered in southwest Fulton. The body was the third black male to be found clothed only in under-shorts and the third to be found in a river.

On March 6, 13-year-old Curtis Walker was found floating in the South River in DeKalb County. Patrick Rogers was found in the Chattahoochee River in Cobb County on Dec. 7, 1980.

Twenty of the slayings, plus two cases in which black youngsters vanished, are being investigated by a police special task force. The two missing children are 10-year-old Darron Glass, last seen Sept. 14, 1980, and Joseph Bell, 16, who disappeared March 3, 1981. A third child, 13-year-

old Timothy Hill, missing since March 13, has not been added to the task force list because police consider him to be a runaway.

When the body was found Monday, dozens of Fulton County police rushed to the muddy, wooded area along Cochran Road, followed by top task force officials, GBI Agent Robbie Hamrick and Atlanta Deputy Police Chief Morris Redding. A rowboat was also brought to the river.

Fulton County Police Chief Clinton Chafin and Assistant Chief Louis Graham, and FBI Special Agent John Glover also sped to the scene, as did members of the Fulton County Medical Examiner's office.

Asked if the body was the latest in the series

of child killings, Chafin said, "I don't think there's any question about that."

Chafin theorized that the body had been thrown into the river "a good ways upstream" and was washed downstream by recent heavy rains because the area where it was discovered is difficult to reach from land. The body caught on debris in the middle of the river, he added.

The body was taken to the Fulton County morgue, where the state Crime Lab was trying to lift fingerprints from the victim. Assistant Medical Examiner John Feegel said that the body appeared to be that of a teen-ager, weighing about 100 pounds.

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Staff Photo—Kenneth Walker

Police Officials And Task Force Officers Confer At Scene Where Youngster's Body Was Recovered

Body

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Dr. Robert Stivers, Fulton County medical examiner, said the body was "pretty well decomposed" and probably would not be identified until Tuesday at the earliest. He said the autopsy would not be started until Tuesday morning.

Feegel, who said the body had been in the river for days, said the body probably was not that of 10-year-old Darron Glass. "Quite frankly, if you assume Glass died when he disappeared (in September), he has to be skeletized by now."

Even though recently adopted guidelines require that the Atlanta police task force be notified immediately of the discovery of a black youth's body, Atlanta Public Safety Commissioner Lee Brown, who was attending an awards ceremony two hours after the body was found, said he had heard nothing of the situation. "If something had happened, I'm sure they would have notified me," he said shortly before 7 p.m.

Chafin said later that Fulton police were not sure until at least an hour after the body's discovery that it should be investigated by the task force. He added that Brown might have been in meetings and out of touch.

W.R. Bedingfield Sr. said he saw four policemen pulling the body out of the water between 4:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. Monday. He said that for the past 33 years he has farmed 500 acres of land along the Chattahoochee River where the body was found.

Bedingfield said the river was swollen by Sunday night's rain, and the body may have been washed downstream only recently.

The last child added to the task force list was Bell, who was reported missing March 3. He has been described by police as being 5 feet 5 inches tall, weighing 100 pounds and having a light complexion. When last seen, he was wearing a blue jogging sweat shirt, brown baggy pants, a green jacket and a blue skull cap.

Glass has been missing from his foster home in southeast Atlanta since Sept. 14. The child had run away and threatened to leave home on several occasions, according to his foster mother, Fannie Smith.

Glass was described as being light-skinned, 4 feet 9 inches tall, and weighing about 75 pounds. He last was seen near the Smith home at 2289 Memorial Drive S.E. He was wearing a yellow T-shirt, khaki pants and white tennis shoes. The case was turned over to the special police task force four days after Glass was reported missing.

Missing persons investigators believe Hill, who is not on the list, is a runaway and police have received several reports that he has been seen since he disappeared from the backyard of 978 Sells Ave. S.W. He was described as being 5 feet 3 inches or 5 feet 4 inches tall, weighing 95 to 100 pounds and wearing a black leather jacket, beige shirt, yellow pants, brown shoes and a red and white cap.

Also contributing to this story were Constitution Staff Writers Emily Ellison, Joe Brown, Tony Cooper, Bob Harrell, Brenda Mooney, George Rodrigue and Ken Willis.